

Frequently Asked Questions about Lymphogranuloma Venereum (LGV)

What is LGV?

LGV (Lymphogranuloma venereum) is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by three types of the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*. LGV can cause genital papules (raised bumps), ulcers, and swelling of the lymph glands in the genital area. LGV may also cause rectal ulcers, bleeding, pain, and discharge. Genital lesions caused by LGV can be mistaken for other ulcerative STDs such as syphilis, genital herpes, and chancroid.

How common is LGV?

LGV is thought to be rare in the United States. However, it can be mistaken for other STDs, so the actual number of cases of LGV in the United States is not known. Outbreaks in some European countries among men who have sex with men (MSM) have raised concerns about the possible growing number of LGV infections in the U.S.

How do people get LGV?

LGV is usually passed through oral, anal or vaginal sex but may also be passed through skin to skin contact. The likelihood of a person becoming infected with LGV after they are exposed is unknown. LGV is less infectious (easily passed from person-to-person) than many other STDs.

What are the signs and symptoms of LGV?

Symptoms of LGV might include genital papules (raised bumps), ulcers, and/or swelling of the lymph glands in the genital area. Other possible symptoms include rectal (anal) ulcers, bleeding, pain, and discharge, especially for those that have had receptive anal sex.

Typically, the first sign of LGV is a small lesion on the genitals or rectum (anal area) which can turn into an ulcer in 3-30 days. If these ulcers are inside the urethra (urine tract), vagina or anus, they may not be noticed.

What health risks are associated with LGV?

Possible complications of untreated LGV include severe ulcers or and/or swelling in the genital or anal areas. Damage to the lymph glands in the genital area can lead to elephantitis (gross enlargement) of genital areas.

As with other STDs, LGV can increase a person's risk for becoming infected with HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) if exposed to the virus. Also, if a person has both HIV and LGV, the risk of passing HIV to sexual partners may be higher than without LGV infection.

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How is LGV diagnosed?

The most common way of diagnosing LGV is through a physical examination by a health care provider. A sample of bacteria from a lesion or site of infection can also be sent to the laboratory for testing, although this test will only be able to tell if bacteria is chlamydial. Still, a positive laboratory test can help to confirm an LGV diagnosis.

If a person has symptoms that might be LGV, a health care provider can collect a specimen and send the sample to his/her state health department for referral to CDC.

How is LGV treated?

LGV can be treated and cured with antibiotics, usually doxycycline or azithromycin. All sexual activity, including oral, anal and vaginal sex, should be avoided until treatment is completed and symptoms of all sex partners have disappeared.

All sex partners of people diagnosed with LGV should be examined by a health care provider and treated, if needed. Re-infection with LGV is possible after treatment, especially if sex partners have not been effectively treated.

How can LGV be prevented?

The surest way to avoid getting or passing STDs is to abstain from any sexual contact, including oral, anal and vaginal sex. Other ways to lower the risk of getting or passing STDs include being in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and is known to be uninfected, and using latex or polyurethane condoms correctly from the beginning to the end of every sex act.

LGV can occur in genital and anal areas that are covered or protected by a latex condom, as well as in areas that are not covered or protected. Correct and consistent use of latex or polyurethane condoms can reduce the risk of getting or passing LGV.

Having had LGV and completing treatment does not prevent re-infection, especially if sex partners have not been effectively treated. People who are treated for LGV should abstain from sexual contact until all medication has been taken and the infection is cleared from all sex partners involved.

Where can I get more information?

- Your healthcare provider
- New Jersey Department of Health website: www.nj.gov/health
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/std/lgv/STDFACT-lgv.htm
- CDC-INFO Contact Center at:
English and Spanish
(800) CDC-INFO
(800) 232-4636
TTY: (888) 232-6348

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